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US Army Foreign Internal Defense Efforts in South Vietnam 1960 to 1973

A Historiographical Essay of:

Neil Sheehan *A Bright Shining Lie*

Andrew Krepinevich *The Army and Vietnam*

Thomas McKenna *Kontum: The Battle to Save South Vietnam*

By:

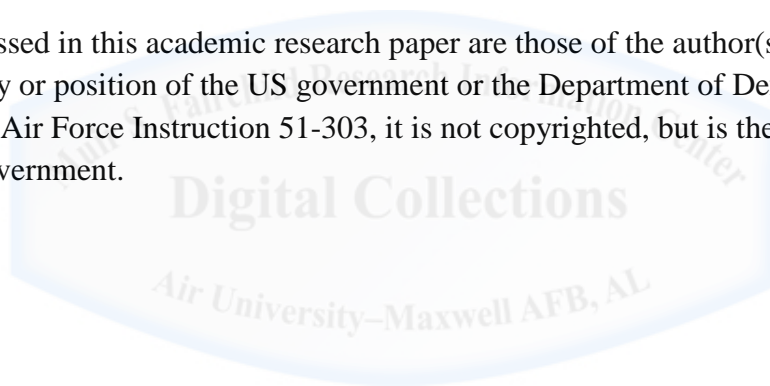
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In addressing the war in South Vietnam, President Kennedy once said “in the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it, the people of Vietnam.”ⁱ America’s involvement in the Vietnam War spanned from the presidential administrations of Dwight Eisenhower to Gerald Ford, lasting over a decade. The United States military involvement ended in 1973, much as it had begun under Kennedy’s administration, as a foreign internal defense (FID) mission with the US military serving in an advisory role. This historiography uses three works to examine these efforts at training the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to defend themselves. Neil Sheehan’s *A Bright Shining Lie* chronicles the life of LTC John Paul Vann who began as an ARVN advisor in 1962 and would end his life defending Vietnam as a senior advisor in 1972. Andrew Krepinevich’s work *The Army and Vietnam*, examines the failure of the US Army’s approach to the war, arguing that a conventional mindset ultimately undermined efforts to conduct a counterinsurgency campaign. Krepinevich’s book weighs heavily on the Army’s early years in the war and the many missed opportunities to fight effectively using a FID approach. Finally, Thomas McKenna’s book *Kontum, the Battle to Save South Vietnam*, explores the role advisors played in the defense of Kontum during the 1972 Easter Offensive and how US FID efforts were having a positive effect in bolstering the ARVN forces. The purpose of this paper is to show that US FID efforts could have had great potential for defeating the Viet Cong insurgency prior to 1965 and defending the country against aggression from the north, had it been properly lead and resourced. Using the texts, the paper will focus on the advisory years of 1961 to 65 and the years of withdrawal of 1969 to 73, and will exclude 1965 to 68 since FID did not play a noticeable role during the years of US intervention when it dominated conventional operations.

A Bright Shining Lie begins with LTC Vann's arrival in Saigon in March, 1962 and details his year as a US Army advisor under the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). Sheehan shows Vann's growing frustration over how the US Army mismanaged the advisory effort. This culminates with the battle of Ap Bac which became the first major defeat for the ARVN under the U.S. advisory program. Frustrated with his senior leaders, Vann turns to the media and reports like David Halberstam to champion his views about the war.ⁱⁱ Sheehan then follows Vann as he returns to the US and attempts to sell his ideas for FID and counterinsurgency to the "big" Army and is subsequently shut out.

Vann retires as a LTC but finds civilian life frustrating. He jumps at the opportunity to work for the State Department and return to Vietnam as part of the the new Civilian Aid Program (USAID) which was hiring military retirees due to the dangerous nature of the job. Van is made a province chief and finds the country much more deteriorated from when he had left. During the years of US intervention and the Tet Offensive, Vann is continually promoted and his ideas on COIN find support with Robert Komer, the director of the new Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) initiative which consolidated all aid and foreign internal defense efforts under one organization.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1969, Vann gets an audience with President Nixon and proposes a plan for phased U.S. troop withdrawals coupled with an increased FID effort. Vann firmly believes that FID is the key to transitioning US forces out of combat operations, and making the ARVN responsible for their own defense. Many of Vann's ideas would become the new policy of Vietnamization. The book only gives a scant 100 pages of insight into the General Abrams years commanding the war, from 1968 to Vann's death in 1972 after the Easter offensive. During the run up to the Easter Offensive, Vann uses his friendship with Brigadier General Fred Weyand to convince General Abrams to promote him to

the rank of civilian major general and lead advisor to II Corps. A civilian had never in American history commanded U.S. military forces in the field, it was unprecedented. Despite some initial successes and defeats, he would make a dramatic stand with his ARVN forces in the defense of Kontum. Vann's victory at Kontum is credited with preserving South Vietnam as a nation since most analysts felt that any enemy penetration south of Kontum would have triggered a collapse of the government and ARVN. Vann's victory at Kontum would be short lived as he would die in a helicopter crash returning to his forward command post from Saigon just days after his greatest triumph.

The second book, *The Army and Vietnam*, breaks the war into three distinct time blocks of advisory years, intervention, and withdrawal. In examining the advisory years of 1954 to 1965, the bulk of this section focuses on the Kennedy administration and his "revolution from above" approach to land warfare. He states that Kennedy was a big proponent of counterinsurgency warfare and that he felt it should be a major mission set for the Army. Krepinevich documents how the US Army resisted Kennedy's attempts to force change and paid only lip service to COIN as a core competency.^{iv} His argument centers on what he calls "The Army Concept" which is the Army's unwavering focus on large-scale conventional warfare. In examining the advisory FID efforts, he outlines how many senior advisors were critical of the ARVN due to poor leadership. He cites LTC John Vann and other advisors in their harsh criticism of MAVC in its approach to training the ARVN in conventional operations. Essentially, the Army taught the ARVN what it knew, namely the Army Concept, a conventional approach to war fighting similar to the high intensity war expected in Europe.

The second section of the book deals with the years of Army intervention in Vietnam, defined as 1965 up to the 1968 Tet Offensive. The author goes on to recount the massive

buildup orchestrated by General Westmorland and how the Army pursued an enemy centric approach to COIN. MAVC adopted a strategy of attrition which focused on body counts and paid no attention to securing the population or training the ARVN. Krepinevich does address the USMC Combined Action Platoons (CAP) and the Army Mobile Training Teams (MTT), both of which attempted to fight a population centric style of warfare. He goes on to show that these programs ran counter to the Army Concept and were downplayed by Westmorland as part of the “other war”. The final section of the book focuses on the years of withdrawal, defined as 1968 to 1973. Here the author spends most of his time focused on the Tet Offensive and its implications for the Army. The book only spends three pages on the General Abrams years of the conflict, 1969 to 1973. The author does not address any of the COIN successes during this period and instead closes his book with the claim that there was little true strategy change between General Westmorland and General Abrams.^v

Kontum: The Battle to Save South Vietnam focuses on the events of the 1972 Easter Offensive by the North Vietnamese army and how the invasion culminated during the battle for Kontum city. Thomas McKenna was a US Army advisor to the 23rd ARVN Division which was responsible for the defense of Kontum. The book is not an autobiography, but captures the history of the fight in the II Corps area of operations in the central highlands. While the book highlights many of the authors experiences, it also tells the story of adjacent units and the higher headquarters which was commanded by John Vann. The book begins in late 1971 when McKenna arrives in Vietnam for his second tour of duty. By this point the US draw-down is in full swing and large security areas are being transitioned to the ARVN as part of Vietnamization. Along with the transition to ARVN in the lead, massive amounts of US material aid were flowing into South Vietnam to include tanks, artillery, helicopters, transport and strike aircraft.

While the US was trying to rapidly equip the ARVN to handle their own security, the one area where the ARVN had systemically had shortcomings since early 1960s was leadership. Senior military officers were promoted for political reasons rather than military prowess. US Advisors like McKenna had severe doubts as to whether their counterparts would stand and fight against a NVA invasion. By the end of 1971, intelligence continued to pour in to MACV Headquarters indicating a large NVA build up across the border in the central highlands and DMZ.

McKenna describes the initial invasion and the collapse of the 22nd ARVN Division, along with the desperate attempts to get US advisors out of fire bases that were about to be overrun. John Vann wielded CAS strikes, particularly the dreaded B52 ARC LIGHT strikes, as his primary weapon to blunt the NVA advance. McKenna gives a stunning account of the battle for Kontum city and goes to great lengths to highlight the leadership and valor provided by Vann and the other US advisors as they propped up their counterparts during the battle. He also shows how the US leveraged airpower, to include AC-130 gunships to break up NVA attacks. Also unique to the battle of Kontum was emerging technology, both Soviet and American, in the form of the first generation anti-tank missile systems. NVA soldiers use AT-3 Sagger to destroy tanks and bunkers inside ARVN fire bases while the US rushes experimental TOW missiles mounted on UH-1s and jeeps to stop advancing T-54 tanks. The book culminates with the defeat of the NVA outside Kontum and the death of John Vann in a helicopter accident. McKenna's book is unique in that it details a small slice of history that has been overlooked by historians. The Easter Offensive was a conventional affair and while it did not reflect COIN operations, it did highlight US FID efforts. The book is ultimately bitter-sweet as it ends with a ARVN / US victory which saves South Vietnam, only to be undone a few years later by the fall of South

Vietnam to the communist in an invasion which essentially a repeat of the Easter Offensive. The difference being that in 1975, there were no US advisors or Arc Light strikes to stop the NVA.

In order to better understand the material it is important to analyze the authors and their backgrounds to determine their biases and point of views. Neil Sheehan is a professional journalist and author having excelled in both fields with a long career in journalism and several books to his name as a popular historian. Sheehan formed a relationship with Vann in 1962 and then continued to be involved in the war as a Pentagon and White House correspondent. He would continue his friendship with Vann over the years as their paths would cross several more times in Vietnam. Sheehan was not only an eye witness too many of the events described during Vann's first year in Vietnam, he also played an active role in conveying Vann's message. He goes so far as to allude to the fact that Vann duped the press corps into doing his bidding and being his champion. Sheehan was an Army veteran himself, having served in uniform during the Korean War and beyond. He has a Harvard education and has considerable experience in Asia working in Korea, Japan and Vietnam. During a tour in Vietnam in 1965, he was one of a handful of correspondents to be lifted into the LZ X-ray during the famous battle of the Ia Drang valley with 1-7 CAV. Sheehan is perhaps most famous for his running of the "Pentagon Papers" in *The New York Times* in 1971. The Papers were a study of the war which was ordered by then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and was leaked to Sheehan by Daniel Ellsberg, a Washington insider and close friend of Vann, who had adopted an anti-war view and argued that the war was illegal from a constitutional standpoint.^{vi} Sheehan does seem to have some very pointed opinions on US senior leaders, both military and civilian, who continued to perpetuate the war for the wrong reasons and tried hard to hide the truth from the American people.^{vii} In regards to Paul Vann, the author shows both sides of Vann's personality, first as an aggressive

officer who tries to stand up for truth. Sheehan then unveils the darker side of Vann's, one that was shaped by troubled childhood and is driven by intense ambition.

Dr. Krepinevich is a former US Army military intelligence officer. Since the late 1980s he has been employed as a defense analyst under several Secretaries of Defense. Today he works for a major strategic think-tank and has advised US Army and Washington leadership on counterinsurgency theories for both Iraq and Afghanistan. In examining the book, it is clear that he had issues with how the Army approached the Vietnam War and that he had an axe to grind in his critical views of the Army Leadership. The book argues strongly that the Army Concept resulted in the force fighting the war it wanted rather than the war it had. He claims the Army took a conventional, enemy-centric approach to the war and disregarded established counterinsurgency doctrine which had been developed in the 1950s with the British in Malaysia. In his argument for the Army's distaste for COIN, he claims that in the post war years, the Army favored officers who had served in line units over those who had been assigned to MTTs, CORDS or as advisors in the post-war era. In this criticism he makes the claim that the Army was so dissatisfied with the outcome of Vietnam that it redoubled its efforts in returning to the Army Concept. With the Soviet threat in Europe ever present, the Army Concept witnessed a rebirth in order to ensure "No More Vietnams".

Thomas P. McKenna is a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel and served two combat tours in Vietnam, the second of which was as an advisor to the 23rd ARVN Division which defended Kontum. *Kontum* is McKenna's first book, his other works being in military and history magazines. If the author portrays any bias it is his intense admiration for John Paul Vann. McKenna drew heavily on Vann's personal papers and some of Neil Sheehan's research to reconstruct the events surrounding the battle.^{viii} While most Vietnam historians credit John

Vann as the architect of the victory at Kontum, McKenna portrays him as a superhuman figure whose unshakeable leadership and determination single handedly held the US/ARVN team together. Ultimately, it is McKenna's goal to bring to light this historic battle which has been neglected by modern historians and is understudied in the US military.

In order to fully understand the intent of each book, a close examination of the authors thesis is required. The main thesis of *A Bright Shining Lie* follows the conventional anti-war theme that Vietnam was an unjust war fought for the wrong reasons and that American leadership could not face the truths of the conflict. John Vann is injected into this line of reasoning as one of the champions, despite his flaws, who understood the conflict and how it should be fought. Throughout the book, Vann is portrayed as a positive yet tragic figure. For each success, Vann suffers a failure or setback. Despite his bad habits and flaws, Vann considers himself held back, prevented by the system from ever reaching his true potential. Sheehan also argues that the WWII generation was to blame for both involving America so deeply in Vietnam, and for failing to see the truth due to protective walls of optimism. He contends that the "greatest generation", as described by fellow correspondent Tom Brokaw, had become accustomed to winning due to WWII and that those leaders in Vietnam could not conceive of anything else but an overwhelming American victory. He goes on to argue that this expectation of victory permeated the three major presidential administrations during the war and the U.S. military leadership to such an extent that they failed to ever see the root causes of the conflict. Sheehan drew his primary research from personal interviews with Vann, his own experience in Vietnam, interviews with key individuals, and the Pentagon Papers.^{ix}

Krepinevich's thesis is the argument that the Army Concept with its focus on conventional war, resulted in the Army's failure to conduct a successful counterinsurgency

campaign. He argues that the US Army by 1960 was a force that has witnessed repeated success in conventional warfare, specifically World War II and to a lesser extent, Korea. This history coupled with the Soviet threat in Europe focused the Army on fighting a conventional war. President Kennedy had rescued the Army by giving it a larger share of the budget, allowing it to buy new equipment and grow in size with the hope that it would embrace COIN practices. Krepinevich makes the argument that the Army only paid lip service to Kennedy's urgings and did not understand the type of war it was about to enter. As a result, the Army failed to fight a population-centric war and to leverage other government organizations to counter the insurgent threat. Krepinevich claims that all the COIN programs that had the potential for success such as CAP, CORDS, the National Police, Ruff Puffs, and Operation Phoenix were to undermanned and underfunded to be successful. The author drew most of his primary research from official Army documents, interviews, and professional articles.

LTC (R) McKenna's main thesis was that it was the US Advisory program and FID efforts which enabled the ARVN to defeat the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive at the Battle of Kontum. The book focuses heavily on the US advisors efforts to prop up weak leadership in the ARVN and make them stand and fight. The author contrasts the 22nd ARVN Division, which was the first to be hit in the attack and melted in the face of NVA assaults, and the 23rd Division which defended Kontum despite desperate odds. McKenna's unstated objective for this book is to capture this small chapter of history on the Vietnam War and to highlight the contribution those advisors made. He also makes the argument that the Easter Offensive, which was a conventional operation, was the type of war the US had been seeking in Vietnam since 1965. This fits well with Krepinevich's argument for the Army Concept and the battle the Army wanted but the NVA never accommodated. Only after the majority of US forces had withdrawn

did the NVA change tactics away from COIN and launch an invasion akin to the North Korean invasion of 1950.^x The author used a lot of Neil Sheehan's primary research which was available in the National Archives, along with 35 interviews of advisors that were at the battle for their firsthand accounts.^{xi}

In comparing the three books, the theme overall remains a FID mission for the US Army. While Sheehan and Krepinevich both talk about the years of intervention and withdrawal, the bulk of each book focuses on the advisory years of 61 to 65. Although the advisory mission didn't end in 65, it definitely took a back seat to conventional operations. McKenna's book is focused on the withdrawal FID efforts of Vietnamization and the battle for Kontum. Sheehan spends a little time here also as he recounts the final days of John Vann defending II Corps during the Easter Offensive. Taken together, the three books offer a fascinating insight into US advisory efforts and highlights the many successes and failures. One of the biggest takeaways comes from Sheehan in showing Paul Vann both beginning his time in Vietnam as an advisor and ending in the same basic capacity 11 years later. In all that time, not much had changed. Although efforts to equip the ARVN had greatly improved from World War II hand-me-downs to first rate US equipment, the biggest handicap remained leadership. Many of the inept mid-level officers Vann was partnered with in 1962 would later be generals when he was senior advisor to II Corps in 1972.

All three books attempt to highlight the fact that the US was not using a solid COIN strategy. Krepinevich is by far the most critical, strongly arguing that the Army was too conventionally focused and applied a European "big war" strategy to Vietnam. Sheehan expounds upon this further in his argument that the WW II generation of officers who dominated our time in Vietnam had come from a tradition of "winning" big wars. This blinded them to the

operational environment in which they had to operate, what General Westmorland would call “the other war”.^{xii} Sheehan and Krepinevich would outline the failures of the early FID campaign as the US Army tried to build a clone of itself under a Corps structure. These efforts ran counter to the VC insurgency already affecting the country. By 1972 however, this conventional force structure proved essential in countering the NVA attack which employed tanks and artillery. McKenna shows in detail how the NVA shifted along the spectrum of conflict to the high conventional end, employing Soviet tactics in a brute force attempt to take the south. During the Easter Offensive, COIN focused units such as the Ruff Puffs, ran terrified from the sound of NVA T54 tanks.^{xiii}

In contrasting the three books, while each deals with FID and leadership by US advisors, only McKenna focuses on the years of withdrawal. He showcases the importance of the advisory efforts showing that “General Abrams considered the advisers essential to his efforts to turn the war over to the Vietnamese, and he wanted to improve the quality of the officers (US) selected for Advisory assignments.” He went on to tell CJCS General Wheeler that he was “actively shifting talent from US units into the advisory thing”.^{xiv} Some of this new emphasis relied more on circumstance rather than a true desire by US officers to serve in a FID role. By 1971 if an officer had not deployed to Vietnam then an advisory assignment was his last chance to see combat before the war ended. Also, McKenna shows that Paul Vann deliberately requested some “seasoned” combat vets, men he personal knew, to take senior advisory positions with the ARVN. Vann solicited leaders like COL R.M. Rhotenberry for the 23rd ARVN Division who Vann felt had more combat experience than any other officer in the Army with five tours in Vietnam under his belt.^{xv} At the national level, General Abrams continued to be asked about equipment which the South Vietnamese military believed would solve all their problems.

Abrams continued to argue that equipment wasn't the issue, it was leadership or a lack thereof which was hurting the ARVN.^{xvi} Sheehan shows some of this in his book but spends too short of a time on the post-Tet years. Although he gives an excellent account of Vann's FID experience during 1962, much of this is due to the fact that he was with Vann during these events. Sheehan was in country during some of the Easter Offensive and was close by when Vann was killed, surveying the sight of the crash days later. *The Army and Vietnam* pays almost no attention to the post-Tet years of the war and even goes so far as to label it as more of the same with no significant difference between Abrams and Westmorland. Krepinevich quotes former CORDS director Robert Komer. "I was there when General Abrams took over and remained his deputy. There was no change in strategy whatsoever. The myth of a change in strategy is a figment of media imagination; it didn't really change until we began withdrawing."^{xvii}

With the stated emphasis of all three books on the role FID played in Vietnam, contrasting the books is easy. Krepinevich's work is focused at the Strategic or "big Army" level. He spends a lot of time examining Army theory and doctrine but does not get down to the tactical level of FID and COIN to discuss specifics. Sheehan's work is more of an autobiography of John Paul Vann. Since the main period of Vann's life which is covered in the book is interwoven with the Vietnam War, the book acts as a history of the conflict from Vann's perspective. Vann was arguably one of the most controversial and dynamic individuals associated with the war. Sheehan's work must give the reader insight into Vann's upbringing and prewar life in order to show both sides of his conflicting character. The Vietnam portion of the book starts at the tactical FID level when Vann was an advisor and then ends at the operational level when he was essentially a civilian-general and senior advisor in the field. Sheehan does examine the war at the strategic level when he profiles senior army and political

leaders and the decisions they made as it related to John Vann. Therefore the book covers many aspects of the war but remains centered on Vann as the main character.

LTC(R) McKenna's book on the battle for Kontum is an almost exclusively tactical level account of the fighting. He describes how advisors lived and worked with their ARVN counterparts. He includes two of the intricacies that come with working a FID mission. The first issue is secrecy, some of the information advisors had could not be shared with their counterparts. Although trust did not seem to be an issue between the ARVN and their advisors, the American officers did not take chances with sensitive information such as ARC LITE strike times and locations. The second issue was advisor evacuation. Vann was not about to let two US officers advising an isolated ARVN regiment get captured when the fire base was overrun by the NVA. As a result, advisors had detailed escape and evasion plans that would lead them to pick-up points for American helicopters. In many instances, this proved to be a huge point of contention as US advisors were either removed prior to an enemy attack to prevent their capture, or were picked up by helicopter while a base was being overrun. In either case, the escape plans and actions only eroded trust from the ARVN point of view.^{xviii} Although McKenna does give some strategic level insight by detailing several meetings Vann had with General Abrams, the book overall remains at the tactical level, focused on the advisors.

All three of these books were picked in order to stay with the theme of Vietnam and foreign integral defense. After examining all three works, two major influences emerge from the case study. The first is the importance FID plays in a counterinsurgency. While not all FID missions are COIN missions and vice versa, FID can be found as a major element of COIN campaigns from Vietnam to Afghanistan. There is a strong historical case to be made regarding US FID efforts during the Kennedy years of Vietnam. At this point the insurgency was stubborn

but not well equipped and was isolated to the extreme rural areas. The US attempted to train and equip the ARVN to mirror the US Army. Senior advisors felt that their mission was a success if they could train up to the division level to execute a large scale exercise. Once complete, the ARVN unit was certified as ready. While this was going on, units were being deployed against the insurgency but with no COIN practices or TTPs. Missions boiled down to large movement to contacts. This pipe dream culminated at Ap Bac when Vann's force ran into a VC unit that stood its ground against US supplied helicopters and M113 APCs, despite not having any surface to air or anti-tank capabilities. The failure of the US advisory program directly correlated to the intervention of US ground forces in 1965. The problems only compounded during the years of US intervention as the ARVN were pushed to the side and taken out of many roles except base defense. There was no effort by US forces to partner with ARVN on operations or to put the Vietnamese face on their actions. The results proved to be predictable as US forces, having lost popular support at home due to Tet in 1968, began to withdraw from Vietnam under the Nixon administration. Due to Vietnamization, by 1971 you had a well-equipped but poorly trained and lead ARVN force. Very little sense of professionalism existed in the officer or NCO corps and units were at half strength or worse due to desertion and corruption. Had the US focused first on training and equipping the ARVN to defeat the insurgency in 1961, it could have later re-equipped and trained the ARVN to defend their country against the NVA threat. During the COIN phase of this fight the US could have used air power to safeguard South Vietnam from a major NVA incursion, thus giving the ARVN operational breathing room to fight and win the counterinsurgency.

The second major influence these books had was on how the US Army should view FID missions, specifically, how to select and train personnel. For many years FID was the

responsibility of US Army Special Forces. When this changed during Operation Iraqi Freedom and conventional units were called to fill the capability, there was a great deal of resistance to the mission. A quick examination of these books will show that history repeats itself. The Advisors in Vietnam were all officers and NCOs drawn from conventional units. During the early years of 1961 to 65, the mission, although combat, was not as desirable as being assigned to Germany to face off against the Soviets. From 1965 to 69, it was more beneficial for an officers career to serve in a regular unit deployed to Vietnam and not as an advisor. During the final years Abrams tried his best to address the shortfall and get good officers to serve as advisors with mixed results. So now as the Army faces the 21st century and is looking at FID as a mission that it will be asked to do in the name of burden and budget sharing with partnered nations, how do you make this work appealing? Today, the Army's approach is to do "big" FID, using entire conventional units to partner with host nation forces. While this gives the conventional units something to do, they might not always be the best fit for the job. The Army already stood up the 168th Infantry Brigade at Fort Polk, LA with the mission of training Military Transition Teams for FID type missions. Currently the curriculum is not tailored to FID and focuses too much on self-defense and basic infantry tactics. This unit should be expanded and allow Army officers to attend a year of training to prepare them with language and cultural skills along with an immersion program on the training, tactics, and weapons the partnered nation will need. At the end, the officer would receive a special identifier as a foreign military advisor that would go on his record. The Army could also offer supplemental "advisor pay" similar to what airborne status and flight status personnel receive now as an incentive. Finally, the Army needs a change its mindset and view these jobs as career builders and not career enders as they are currently viewed.

I would highly recommend all three of these books. *A Bright Shining Lie* was the most entertaining since John Vann was such a dynamic and controversial character. *The Army and Vietnam* is most insightful from a historical standpoint. It proves that history does repeat itself as many of the Army's actions and attitudes today reflect the same behavior seen in 1961. Finally, LTC(R) McKenna's book captures a lost chapter of history with the defense of Kontum. The editing could be better and it becomes instantly apparent that this is the author's first book. Many of the thoughts are disjointed, run along tangents, or don't match up. Still, the book is an entertaining read that not only highlights US FID efforts but also shows the power of the ARC LITE B52 strike when used in an interdiction capacity. Likewise, the battle gives a glimpse of the emerging first generation anti-tank missiles, namely the TOW and AT-3 Sagger. The Sagger would go on a year later to shock the armor community with its "game-changing" employment during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It is highly recommended that Sheehan's book be included in the ACSC required reading while Krepinevich's book be added to the Small Wars elective reading list.

ⁱ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York, Viking, 1983). 641.

ⁱⁱ Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Van and America in Vietnam*, (New York, Random House, 1988), 749.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

^{iv} Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, (Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 42.

^{vi} Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, 749.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 316-318.

^{viii} McKenna, *Kontum*, 269-270.

^{ix} Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, 801.

^x McKenna, *Kontum*, 148.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, 270.

^{xii} Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, 657. General Westmorland was very focused on the conventional aspects of the war and paid little attention to COIN efforts such as the USMC CAPs program.

^{xiii} McKenna, *Kontum*, 218-219. The NVA for the first time in the war employed medium tanks like the T54, and modern artillery like the Soviet 130mm which outranged most US supplied equipment. They combined this new equipment with some more traditional asymmetric methods such as large volumes of ground launched rockets and sapper attacks. The NVA also replaced some of their combat losses with captured ARVN equipment which was

hastily abandoned by terrified troops to included howitzers and tanks. Many advisors reported being on the receiving end of US made 155mm artillery, captured by the NVA.

^{xiv} Ibid., 10. General Abrams felt that US officers viewed advisory jobs detrimental to their careers and preferred combat units. He made many efforts with the JCS to get better people and was added by the fact that US forces were rapidly drawing down and disengaging from combat. For example, of the 68,000 troops in Vietnam during the Easter Offensive, only the TOW jeep platoon from the 82nd Airborne and elements of the 17th Air Cav (TOW equipped UH-1) were allowed to participate in the defense.

^{xv} Ibid., 174. It was Vann's hope that these experienced combat leaders would provide the backbone the ARVN needed to stand and fight the NVA. Also, due to the initial setbacks with the 22nd ARVN DIV, Vann felt his reputation was on the line after 11 years in country and that Kontum had to be held.

^{xvi} Ibid., 190.

^{xvii} Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 257. This falls in line with the majority of the major works on Vietnam which focus on the years of US intervention and pay little attention to the draw-down period under Abrams. Krepinevich's quote from Kromer discounts four entire years of the war as "more of the same".

^{xviii} McKenna, *Kontum*, 193.

